Current Support Brief

SOVIET BLOC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

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SOVIET BLOC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Since 1954 the countries of the Soviet Bloc* have made available to the less developed countries economic and military assistance totaling nearly $8 billion. The inadequate human resources in recipient countries required to absorb this aid, however, have necessitated the inclusion of a program of sizable technical assistance. This problem has been particularly acute in the Bloc's military assistance programs, where the manpower base of aid recipients has proved to be inadequate to supply, in a brief period of time, the personnel to command, operate, and maintain their newly augmented military establishments and to assimilate the rapid influx of modern and often complex Communist military equipment. The result has been a flow of large numbers of Bloc technicians to countries receiving economic and military aid and the dispatch of sizable numbers of personnel to Bloc countries for training.

1. Scope of the Program

As the pace of implementation of the Bloc's programs has quickened, the number of such technicians in the less developed countries has grown with the increase in aid shipments. In 1957, there were 1,600 technicians engaged in economic programs in the less developed countries; in 1960, there were 5,000, and in 1963, more than 11,000 (see Figure 1). In contrast, about 3,500 US technical personnel were employed in the less developed countries during the fiscal year 1963. The Bloc has sent about 41,000 economic technicians abroad since the inception of the program in 1954. Moreover, about 6,800 personnel from the less developed countries have received training at agricultural, industrial, and governmental facilities in Bloc countries during the period 1955-63 (see Figure 2), compared with about 45,000 trainees who were brought to the US under the participant training program during the same period.**

About 11,500 Bloc military technicians and advisers, nearly all from the USSR, have trained indigenous forces in the less developed countries. Nearly 16,400 persons from these countries have undergone training at Bloc military installations, compared with more than 100,000

* The USSR and the Eastern European Communist countries.

** About 13,000 additional trainees received training in other countries with US aid funds.

military personnel from the less developed countries who have received training in the US under the Mutual Security Program.*

a. Economic Technical Aid

Bloc economic technical assistance -- estimated at $370 million for technicians and training during the period 1955-63 -- is generally dispensed within the framework of major lines of credit extended for economic development projects and, for the most part, resembles the technical services made available by Western private enterprise. Initial project surveys and studies, supervision of construction projects, on-the-job training, and, in some cases, management of the completed installation for as much as 1 year -- all constitute the technical aid rendered under these credits. In recent years, however, there has been a rapid increase in technical assistance agreements not connected with specific economic aid projects. Bloc personnel employed under such arrangements are generally engaged in managerial, educational, medical, economic planning, agricultural, and other activities.

The willingness of the Bloc to maintain such sizable technical assistance programs usually has no more sinister motive than a desire to see its aid programs implemented as expeditiously as possible. Difficulties, delays, and inefficient use of equipment in the field, regardless of fault, often tarnish the image and prestige of the donor. The Bloc countries have sought to avoid such an onus by providing the bulk of professional and technical skills required for their own developmental projects and at the same time by teaching similar skills to indigenous personnel for use on projects currently underway and on those yet to be undertaken.

The employment of large numbers of Bloc technicians, however, has been expensive and, for some recipient countries, has been a serious financial burden: since 1954, about $325 million has been expended for technical services. The foreign exchange component** of these outlays is drawn from the developmental credit and has accounted for about 20 percent of actual expenditures under all Bloc economic credits. These

* Thirty-six thousand additional military personnel were trained in other countries with funds of the Mutual Security Program.

** That is, the foreign exchange equivalent of the costs of importing technical services, repayment for which usually is made in commodities of the recipient country.

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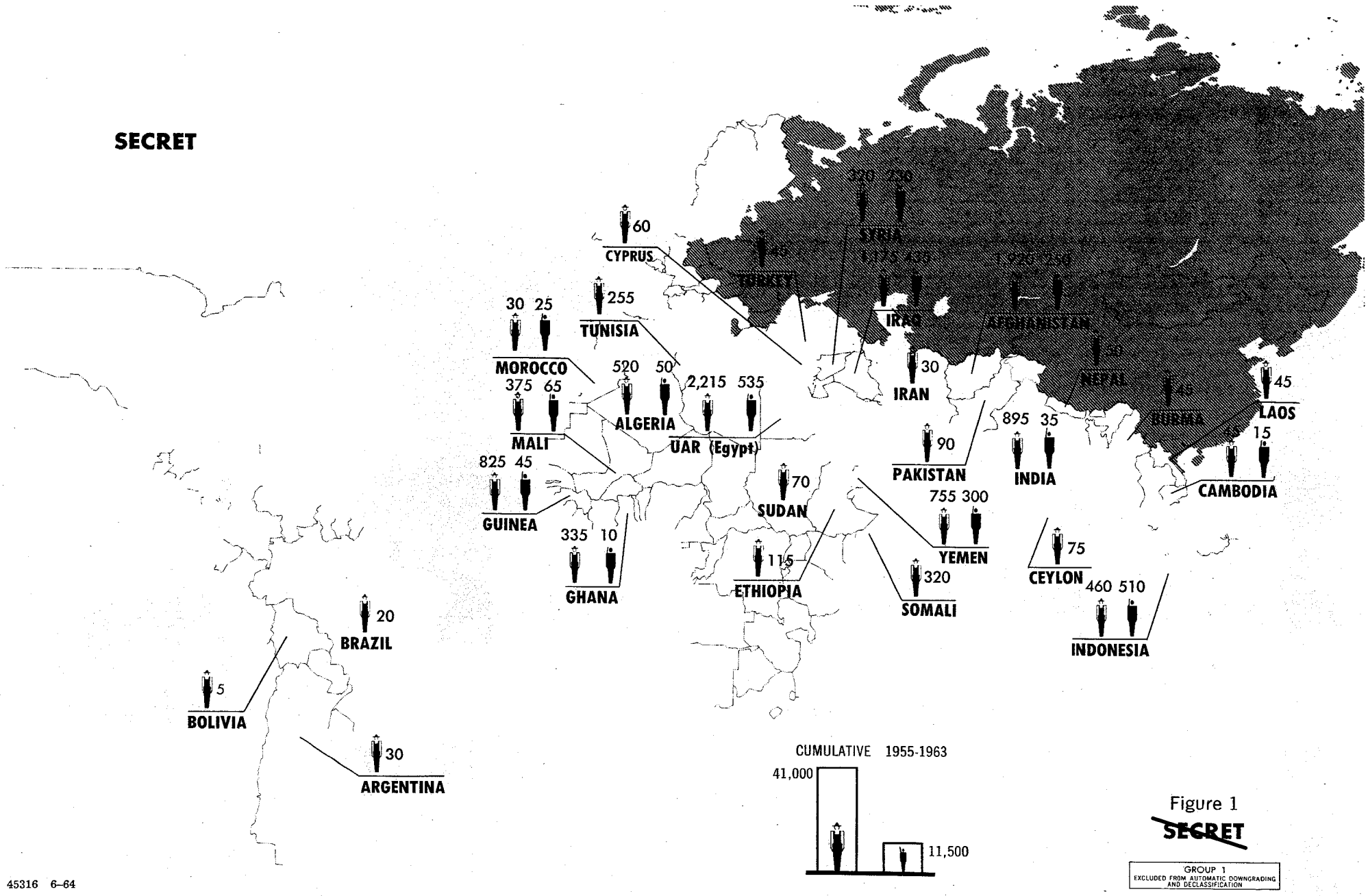

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Figure 1

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SOVIET BLOC ECONOMIC AND MILITARY TECHNICIANS IN THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE FREE WORLD, 1963*

*Number present for one month or more, rounded to the nearest five.

Economic technician

Military technician

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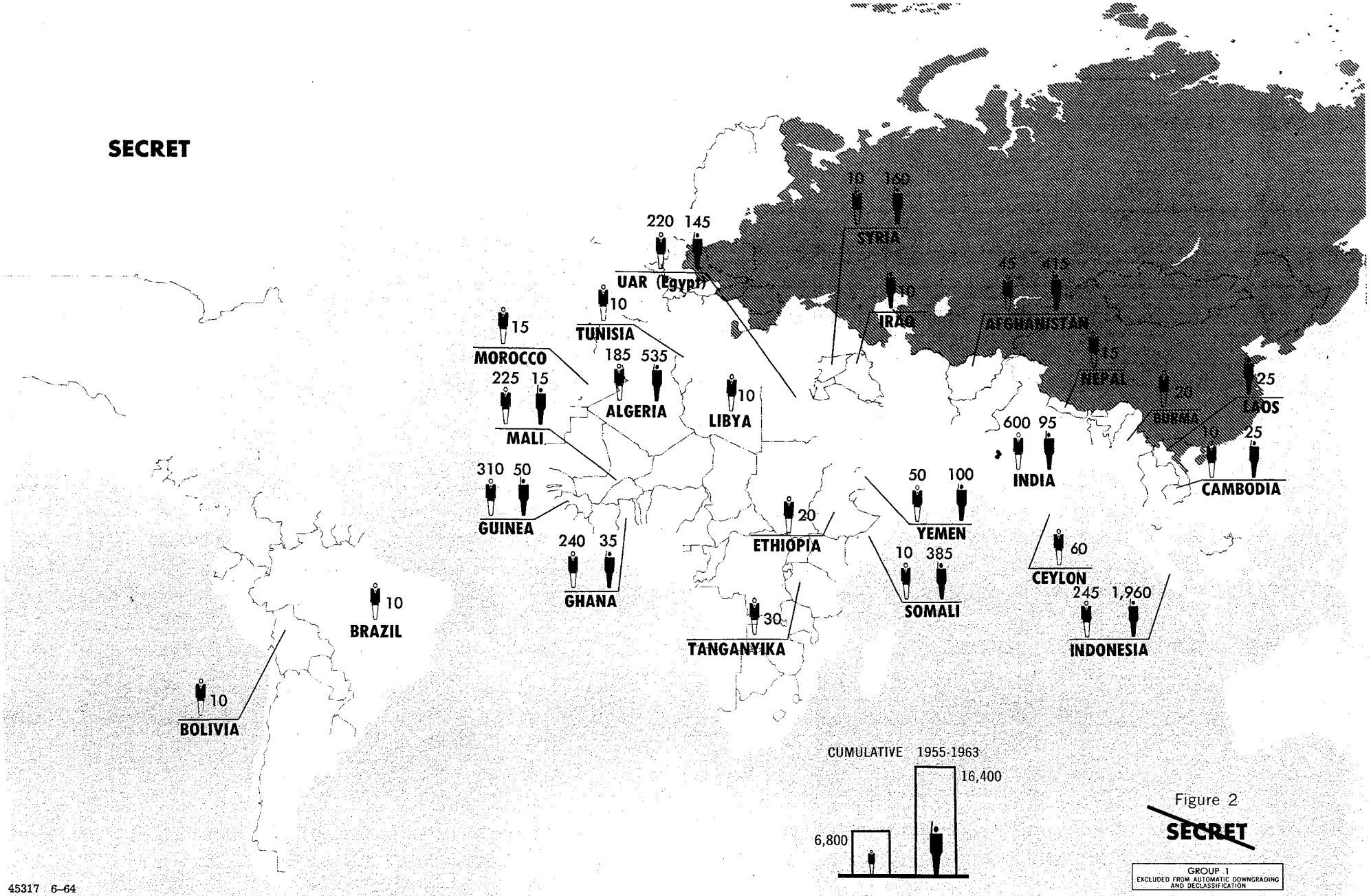

Figure 2

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TRAINEES IN THE SOVIET BLOC FROM THE LESS DEVELOPED COUNTRIES OF THE FREE WORLD*

1963

*Numbers in training during 1963.

costs tend to be high because the recipient country is held responsible for all costs connected with the employment of the visiting technicians. In addition to these charges the host country also is responsible for providing a variety of domestic facilities and services, including free medical care and hospitalization for the technician and his family.

In general, the average total cost to an aid recipient for the services of one specialist is estimated at about $8,500 per year. Calculated on this basis, the cost to Afghanistan, for example, which has employed about 1,750 Bloc technicians annually in recent years, totals almost $15 million per year. Although the cost per person is somewhat higher than for Western European counterparts, it is substantially less than the cost of US personnel with comparable job specifications. The narrowness of functional specialization of Bloc technicians, however, requires a larger number of such persons for any given project. Moreover, US technical assistance, unlike that of the Bloc, is largely grant aid.

b. Military Technical Aid

In contrast to the Bloc's programs of economic technical assistance, most of the costs for military training in the Bloc and for the services of military technicians represents current expenditures. Only $40 million in long-term credits have been provided to cover the cost of Bloc military technical assistance, which has been estimated at more than $230 million during the period 1955-63.

The largest part of these programs, in terms of cost and personnel, consists of training military personnel from the less developed countries at Bloc military installations for periods ranging from 6 weeks to 5 years. Among the more significant programs has been the training of military personnel at such Soviet higher military schools as the Frunze Military Academy and the Military Academy of the General Staff. Through these military training programs, the Bloc has established important relationships with many middle-grade officers who in the future may hold key positions in their countries. This is particularly significant for those countries controlled by military hierarchies. Although more overt attempts at indoctrinating such trainees generally have been discontinued after official protests by the less developed countries, more subtle efforts in this activity presumably continue.

All expenditures incurred during the training programs are borne by the recipient countries. Charges for various types of training range from $350 a month for programs involving primarily classroom instruction to $1,100 for each flight hour of training on the MIG-21 jet fighter. To these charges are added round-trip transportation costs, personal allowances, and expenditures for warm clothing. For example, the training of 800 naval personnel at Vladivostok for 10 months to man a Sverdlov-class light cruiser purchased from the USSR cost Indonesia about $3.5 million.

The costs, both in foreign exchange and in local currency, connected with the employment of Bloc military technicians are similar to those for the economic technicians. The average annual total cost of the services of one military technician is estimated at about $9,000. The most important functions of these technicians are to deliver, assemble, and maintain military equipment; train indigenous military personnel in tactics and in the operation and maintenance of equipment; and serve as advisers to military officers in staff and line units. In the latter function, Soviet military officers have planned and implemented reorganizations of specific military units, have commanded tactical training exercises, and have suggested the types of military equipment to be purchased.

2. Outlook for the Program

Available information in recent years indicates that the Bloc's technical assistance programs have brought something less than unqualified success to donors and recipients alike. In nearly all countries receiving their aid, the Bloc countries have encountered numerous obstacles to the rapid implementation of programs for economic and military aid. Although most of the obstacles cannot be attributed to Communist failings, the Bloc still bears the onus of any lack of progress on a development project. The contact that aid recipients have had with Bloc technicians and Communist societies through the training programs also has generated mixed feelings toward Bloc institutions and techniques. Personnel who have had training in Communist countries have registered numerous complaints concerning language difficulties, poor living conditions, severe security restrictions, indoctrination efforts, lack of contact with the populace, and racial problems.

In spite of these difficulties these technical assistance programs may be expected to continue and to expand. The demands from the less developed countries for economic and military aid from all external sources are likely to increase, and the Communists give every indication that they will continue to be an available source of such assistance. Although some countries have received Bloc military assistance for nearly 10 years, they remain plagued by a chronic need for skilled personnel. The problem is likely to be compounded by the Bloc's willingness to provide increasingly complex military equipment. Moreover, similar requirements from new military aid recipients are likely to occur as countries seeking large quantities of arms will feel compelled to turn to the Communist countries for military assistance because there is no readily available alternative source from which military equipment can be procured for the purposes and on the scale that these countries desire.

In the economic area, about two-thirds of the extensions of Bloc economic aid remain to be implemented. During the past 2 years the pace of project construction has increased, a trend that will continue for at least 2 more years. In addition, new economic aid agreements are being concluded, and other sizable commitments probably are in the offing. Moreover, technical assistance agreements not connected with specific projects are likely to become more significant. Bloc economic planners have become painfully aware that in many countries a greater number of technical personnel must be trained and that additional technical services must be provided to permit a faster rate of capital accumulation. Much of this must be accomplished with a nonproject type of technical assistance. A considerable period of time will be required before the less developed countries themselves can provide the bulk of professional and technical personnel to bridge the gap between their capabilities and their aspirations.

Analyst:

Coord: